



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ISSUES BUSINESS
REVIEW LETTER ON AIRPLUS CREDIT CARD PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Department of Justice today announced that it does not intend to challenge under the antitrust laws a proposal by AirPlus to expand its credit card program to merchants in the United States and to allow United States airlines to become card-issuing members of AirPlus.

Airplus' member airlines issue credit cards to subscribers, consisting of individuals and businesses who use the cards to purchase airline tickets, hotel, car rental and other travel-related services. AirPlus recruits merchants to accept the cards as payment for such goods and services.

Nine international airlines currently are participants in the program: Aer Lingus, Alitalia, Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Finnair, Iberia, Lufthansa, Sabena and Swissair.

The Department's position was stated in a letter from John W. Clark, Acting Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Antitrust Division, to Donald I. Baker, an attorney for AirPlus.

Clark stated that the AirPlus program is unlikely to facilitate collusion among card issuers and that the existence of a number of other credit cards that can be used for travel-related services lessens the concern that the introduction of the AirPlus card could lead to anticompetitive effects in the credit card

market. Clark's letter also states that the AirPlus program is unlikely to adversely affect competition in air transportation markets.

Under the Department's Business Review Procedure, an organization may submit a proposed course of action to the Antitrust Division and receive a statement as to whether the Division would challenge that action under the federal antitrust laws.

A file containing the business review request and the Department's response will be made available to the public immediately and may be examined in Room 3233, Antitrust Division, United States Department of Justice, Tenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20530 (telephone: 202-514-2481). After a 30-day waiting period, the documents supporting the business review will be added to the file.

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